

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 20, 2012

Agenda Item: Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2013 – Red Rock Creek

Division: Fish and Wildlife **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background

On October 11, 2012, the FWP Commission delayed making a final decision on proposed fishing regulation changes for Red Rock Creek, Upper Red Rock Lake, and Widgeon Pond. These waters are located in the FWP Central Fishing District; Upper Red Rock Lake, Widgeon Pond and the lower reaches of Red Rock Creek are located within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The changes are part of a 5-year long research effort intended to determine effects of predation and competition from non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout hybrids on the native Arctic grayling population in the Red Rock Creek system. The Department requested that the Commission delay its decision on these proposed changes in order for the Department to communicate further with the USFWS about potential impacts on trumpeter swans in the Refuge. After conferring with the USFWS, the Department is proposing that the Commission adopt as final the changes for Red Rock Creek but not adopt the changes for Red Rock Lake and Widgeon Pond. The Red Rock Creek regulations would be as follows (*New language is in italics*. Deleted language is indicated by strikethrough): RED ROCK CREEK (Beaverhead River drainage)

- *Open entire year except May 15 through June 14*
- ~~Combined trout: Includes cutthroat trout~~
- *Cutthroat trout: 20 daily and in possession*

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP didn't receive any comments on the proposed changes for Red Rock Creek, Upper Red Rock Lake, and Widgeon Pond during the official comment period.

Alternatives & Analysis

The Commission could choose not to adopt the proposed regulation changes for Red Rock Creek. Instead, USFWS staff could cull fish from Red Rock Creek using traditional fisheries sampling approaches. This alternative would still enable the Department to assess whether competition and predation on Arctic Grayling by cutthroat trout is a factor in the decline of this species. This alternative would not, however, create angling opportunities or allow anglers to participate in our conservation efforts.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

The Department recommends the Commission adopt the regulation changes for Red Rock Creek, which would enhance angling opportunities and potential harvest of non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout hybrids. A reduction in cutthroat trout would help to assess whether they are having an impact on grayling through predation and competition. The Department recommends the Commission not adopt the proposed regulation changes for Red Rock Lake to avoid potential impacts on trumpeter swans. The Department recommends that the Commission not adopt the proposed regulation changes for Widgeon Pond at this time. The USFWS is initiating an environmental assessment for Widgeon Pond and nearby Culver Pond. Depending on the outcome, the Department may approach the Commission again with the proposed changes for Widgeon, as well as Culver Pond.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt FWP's proposed final regulation changes for Red Rock Creek for the 2013 fishing season.